

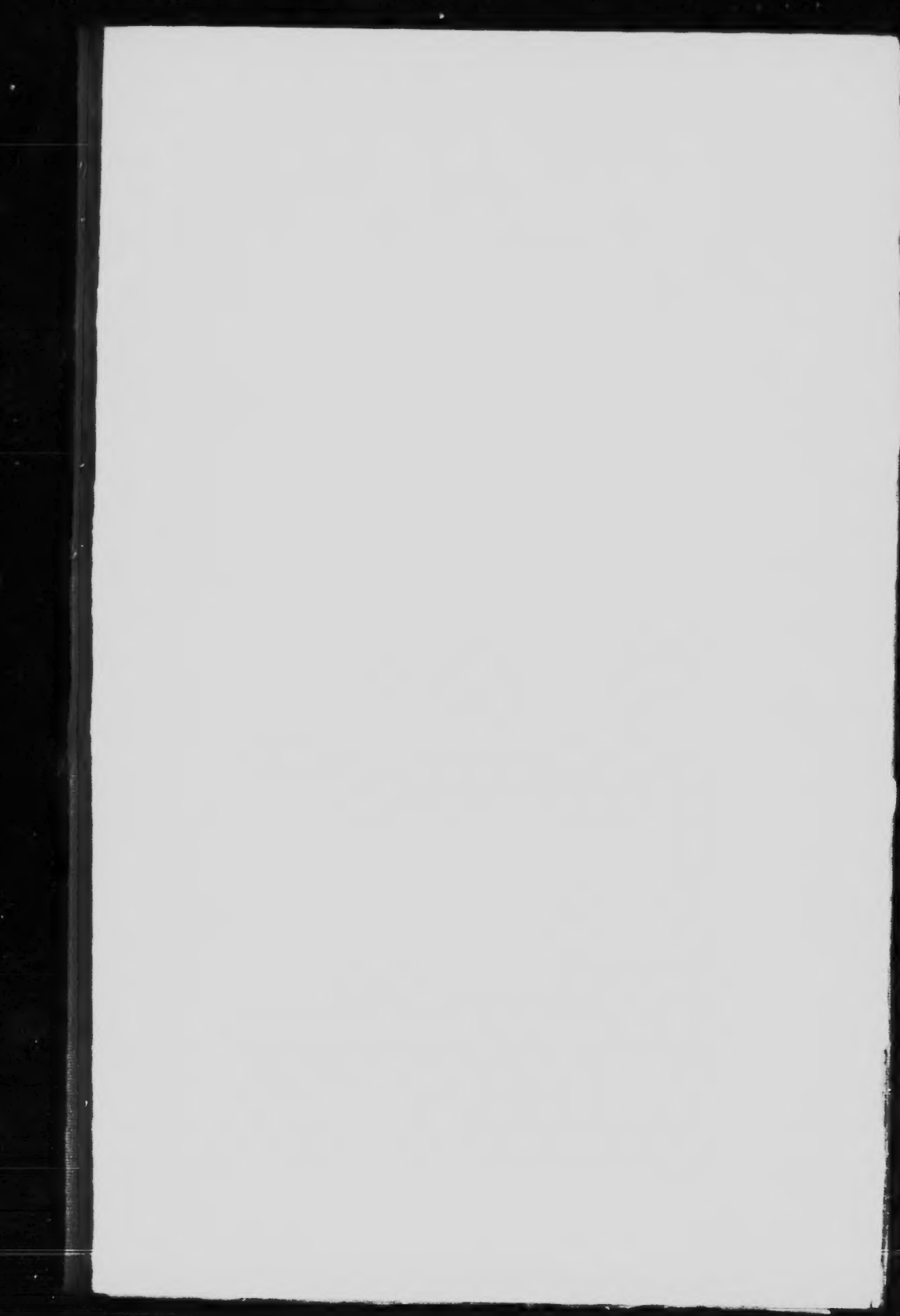
~~Car. Atkins, Chas. H. C.~~
Mr. & Mrs. Alan Crawley.

With compliments
+ regards.

Thos H Atkins

Stanstead.

1919.





POEMS

BY
CARROLL AIKINS



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1917

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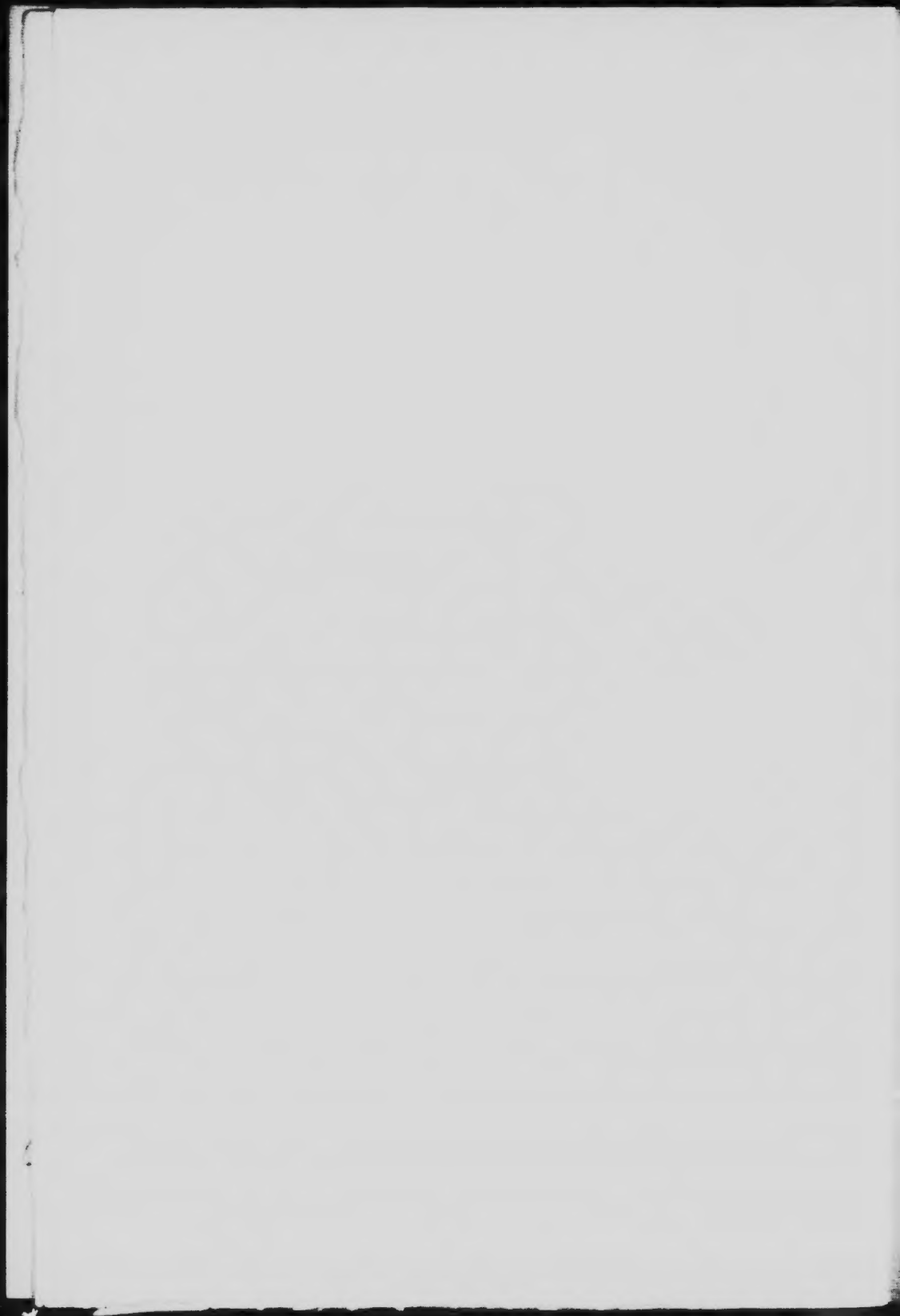
1917

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER

Greater than temples, greater than the song
Of priest and chorister at their craft and art,
Are the nice balances of right and wrong
That swing to mercy, in a good man's heart.



NOTE

The author's thanks for permission to reprint certain of the poems included in this collection are due the Editors of *Scribner's Magazine*, *McClure's Magazine* and *The Canadian Magazine*.



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POEMS



CREDO

I BELIEVE in God and Fairies,
Hell and Heaven, hearts' desire.
I believe in lovers' fancies,
Morning star and sunset fire.

I believe in work and leisure,
Idle wine and bleeding hands.
I believe in pain and pleasure,
Mountains of the shifting sands.

I believe in good and evil,
Secret gift and open ill.
I believe in truth and cavil,
Aconite and daffodil.

I believe in woman's honour,
Be it chaste or otherwise.
I believe in man's endeavour,
Though it wing in barren skies.

I believe in soul and spirit,
Sensitive and gossamer.
I believe in luck and merit,
Wage-slave and adventurer.

I believe in peace and conquest,
Orchard-close and field of strife;
For, in mocking mood or earnest,
Have I great belief in life.

I WOULD NO LORDLY OVER-WEAL

I would no lordly over-weal,
No hound of chase,
No costly ring, no kingly seal,
No maid's embrace.

But I would root in roadside clay
My singing tree
That travelers of the Western way
May come to me

And, resting in the cool release,
Each pilgrim heart
Find, in my shaded singing, peace
E'er he depart.

SONNET

No! In that thou art fair I love thee not —
Those eyes that hold the rapture and the gleam
Of stars in misty summers, eyes that seem
The havening of each outshadowed thought,
In all save love and gentleness untaught;
That hair! The ripple of a midnight stream!
That face! That body! All that others deem
Most to be loved — I hold them less than
naught!

For thy true spirit is as far above
The templed beauty as the star of love
Set in immortal skies. The soul's design
Of courage and compassion is so fine
In undissolved allegiance, that I hold
Thy mortal loveliness as dross to gold.

GREY SISTERS

SHE stood upon her life's tumultuous brink
And all the happy seasons ran to meet
Her girlhood, and to gather at her feet
The flowers of youth, the blossoms white and
pink.

All deeds were hers, all thoughts, to do and
think,

All the unfashioned, all the endless sweet
Of love and life — these wove about her feet
Their chain of years untarnished, link on link.

And as she stood, still hesitant, a child
Unventured, unrevealed, the stainless vow
Of youth upon her young lips undefiled,
From the great outer emptiness there sped
Three passionless grey sisters of the dead
That kissed her on the eyes and lips and brow.

IN THE ORCHARD

I SEE God in my orchard every hour,
And in the downward pulses of the sun
I feel His heart beat, and I feel the power
Of pregnancy in every passing shower;
And still I find His infinite spirit spun
In bud and blossom, and His bidding done
By amber bees, and many a pollened flower
With mating song and silent orison.

And when night hovers over field and grove
With shadowy plumage, and all creatures sleep,
Still on the lake the gulls in waters keep
A lamping vigil with His stars above,
And in the vast, unventured hills I see
The awful measure of His mastery.

THE RIVER

THROUGH the unclanging city, girt and pent
With walls of granite, the slow river glides,
A drowsy woman, wrapped in changing tides
Of starry vesture, torn and sharply rent
By stabbing spire and shadowy battlement,
And, drifting 'neath grey bridges, dully chides
Her bastion-lovers with a weak lament
And droops to sleep amid her silent tides.

And from the city, one that had no bread
And one that wept because his love was dead
Of his own doing, and such others came
As were life-thwarted in the streets of shame,
And from their starveling sleep went down to
dream
With the unwakeful woman of the stream.

PRAYER

LET me not live by twilight, Lord, I pray,
Nor drowse my life out in the empty grey
Cathedral shadow where the fountains play.

Oh, drench me in the sun's downpouring light
O: give me starflung passionate delight!
Only the noon is splendid, and the night.

THE CABIN ON THE PLAIN

"THE Spring will come! And then, and then,"
they said,

Those blue lips babbling ever of the Spring.
But through the cabin door the windy sting
Of prairie winter swept the pillowed head.

"The Spring will come!" Life's stealthy
afterglow

Brightened the worn young face. "With
flowers of May!"

But the encircling prairie crept away
In level wastes of shadowless white snow.

"And when it comes. . . ." The hopeful,
childish breath

Broke in a shallow whisper, hard and dry.
The stainless depths of the incurious sky
Were blue and vacant as the eyes of death.

The Spring wind whispers in the fields of grain,
The birds sing, and the first faint flowers
come out,

Grow bolder, brighter, garland it about. . . .
The little empty cabin on the plain.

TO _____

I LOVE thee for my sorrows; they shall creep
Into thine eyes and be transfused, and shine
Like bubbles of a dark, unprisoned wine.
I love thy laughter for the tears I weep.

And for my sins I love thee; they shall hide
Their darkness in thy bright, untroubled breast
And feed thine innocence, as poisonous weeds
 are blest

In burial to feed the fairest garden-side.

And to the world thy laughter and thy grace
Shall be more lovely for the gifts I bear;
For sorrow shall have touched thy shining face,
And pity, thy quiet breast, with trembling care.

SARDONYX

THERE lives beside the Tyrrhene sea
An artisan, who lovingly
Gives all his days of sun or shade
In pleasant labour, love-repaid,
To carving faces, grave or gay
As sard or as chalcedony.
And as he works the veined stone
His passing fancies to enthrone,
So do I write with pen and ink
The dreams I dream, the things I think.
And as each careless day destroys
His cameos (such fragile toys!)
I dare not hope this verse of mine
May even live so long a time.
He labours less with hands than heart
As I do now, with lesser art,
But we are equals, man to man,
In pleasures of the artisan!

CHANSON À DEUX

As unto us is given
One birth, one death,
So, under widest heaven,
One sense, one breath

Of downward winds love-laden
Is mine, is thine;
Be joy thy love's hand-maiden,
As song is mine.

MY LADY OF THE LIGHT CANOE

If the bent, hurrying god should say,
"Go, live again thy happiest day!"
With what a glad, swift-joyous heart
I'd run, and thrust the boughs apart,
Stoop to the water's edge, and you,
My Lady of the light canoe.

Out where the vigorous sunlight pours
A flood of gold on the tumbled floors,
Our paddles dip to the running wave—
Ah! Youth is merry! And Youth is brave,
And the haven of Youth is the Isle of Charms
And the wings of Youth are swift, brown arms!

My Lady of the light canoe,
Go wind and weather well with you?
And do you still loose down your hair,
And have you still no heavier care
Than making tea and toast for two,
My Lady of the light canoe?

SPRING

UNDER the frozen sod she lay
And could not smile or weep;
But grief was with him all the day
And grievous was his sleep.

Above her grave the shrunken earth
Was garmented a-new;
She could not see the greening birth
Of grasses, edged with dew.

She could not hear the bluebirds sing
Of matings in the wood;
But he could sense the yearning spring
In every straining bud.

And as he walked a midnight street,
From gaping windows wide
Came light and lilt of dancing feet
That would not be denied.

O Earth, be merciful and kind
To her within thy trust;
Pray God the dead be deaf and blind,
Pray God that dust is dust!

GIVE ME YOUR EYES TO LOVE

GIVE me your eyes to love, daughter of glad-
ness!

Warm as the ocean by midsummer noon,
Cool as the ripples that riot their madness
Down the long river-reaches a-slope from the
moon!

Give me your eyes to love, daughter of sorrow!
Soft as rose petals asleep in the rain,
Sad as the midnight with never a morrow,
Darker than Death, and his plumage of pain!

Give me your eyes to love, now and hereafter!
Eyes of the spirit in shadow or light,
That all the day long I may live with their
laughter
And bide with their sorrow the span of the
night!

THE CHOSEN

God has designed
To ride the wind
A lustful Death
With icy breath,
And woe betide
The builder's pride,
The poet's youth,
The dreamer's truth,
For He has need
Of urgent deed,
Of valiant sight,
Of rhymed delight,
And never trees
May shelter these
From that swift form
Astride the storm.

THE GREY ROOM

Oh, this grey room with love is lit
As room has never been,
And urgent fire-flung envoys flit
Between us and between;

And though they speak a stranger tongue,
Unused beyond our door,
No sweeter song was ever sung
In any room before.

CONTENT

DECEMBER sits a-loft the sky
And plucks the snow-clouds' wintry fleece;
I hear his snarling hounds go by,
But in my house is peace

The frost is patterned on the pane;
The shivering storm runs bare above;
The trees are naked in the lane,
But in my house is love.

GOOD TO WALK THE WORLD WITH

Good to walk the world with,
Such a mate!
Good to love and live with,
Soon and late.

Good to take God's sending,
Though it be
But a by-path wending
To the sea.

Good to walk the path with
Such a friend!
Good to sail the sea with,
At the end.

CARPENTRY

In this belittered room the candle-sprite
Cuts and is quit of the uneven walls,
Flickers and dies on chisel, plane and saw,
But dances ever by the unfinished crib
As if the unborn tenant, girl or boy,
Already peered between the latticed chinks
And loved the play, and laughed with shining
eyes.

And on that younger face the glory shone
Of our own Springtime; and the love that fled
Into our friendlier summer shyly came
And put his arms about me, wistfully.

VIGIL

THAT he be true, this pledge of ours,
We still must hold above
The cradle of his dawning hours
The vigil of our love,

And touch those blue, unclouded eyes
With rays of tempered fire,
And steer the spirit's frail surmise
To venture its desire,

Not with the torrent's mad delights,
But on that inland sea
Of charted reefs and steady lights
That is self-mastery.

TO A CHILD

I CLING to thee, as thou
To laughter clingest;
I sing to thee, as thou
To thy heart singest.

Thou, whom the elves make free
Of elfin lands —
Child, are they aught to thee,
My clinging hands?

Thou fluttering baby-bird
On fairy wing,
Sweeter thy songs unheard
Than those I sing.

Starry my child alway
Hides from the morrow;
Knows he that age is grey —
Age that is sorrow?

JUNE ROSES

Soft as the leisured sunset
My roses take the night,
And some are pale with loving,
And some with love are bright.

Theirs is the quiet evening,
The deep and starry breath
Of skies that know not sorrow,
Of dew that knows not death.

O roses of St. Eloi,
That glimmer in the night —
Why are they pale, thy petals?
Why are thy petals bright?

O roses of St. Eloi,
That breathe the battle-breath —
Pale with the dews of anguish,
Bright with the blood of death.

IN NO MAN'S LAND

WOUNDED, he prayed for death,
And silently death came,
And he was glad.
He felt the easing of his muscles,
A sweet throbbing of music in his wounds,
The dew, cool on his wrists and lips.
And he was glad,
Glad when death came, O Mother.

BEAUTY

GREAT GOD! What blindness of the living eyes
Was ours that we went knocking at the door
Of her whose sterile breast and barren thighs
Are desolation and the mounds of war.
Now, in the night of terror and surprise,
We crouch and tremble; Beauty is no more;
In her sweet bed a cynical foul whore
Laughs shrilly when the heart of childhood dies.

Oh! Where is Beauty, innocent, enraptured
Of the new leaf, the song of the birds, the wind,
Shadows of trees, night and the clear, uncaptured
Glory of morning? Shall our children find
The print of her swift feet, and leap and run
With her bright limbs against the golden sun?

FROM THE MOUNTAINS

THE HERMIT OF WHISPERING CREEK

THE people say I've lived so long
(A thousand year, if I'm not wrong)
In this old shack, with floor for bed,
That I've got sawdust in my head.
We'll call them fools, and let it go;
They think I'm mad; they are, I know,
For not a soul of them can hear
My water-voices, singing clear!
Their city is a passing lie,
But these stream-voices shall not die,
At least — God save me from that fear,
They've been my friends a thousand year!

Stranger, you know old Siwash Bill,
Who lives behind the Eight-Mile Hill?
Don't know old Bill? His son's your guide!
The half-breed? Yes. Bill lost his pride.
An Oxford man he says he was.
Left England for the Big Because —
No matter that! But Old Bill said,
And swore it on his father's head,
That he had heard (and was not drunk,
And was not dreaming in his bunk)
That he had heard a preacher say
This stream was being ditched away!
He said the pilot had it straight,
The whole damned project, name, and date,
To steal my water to reclaim

Dry Valley from its "wasteful shame."
Dry Valley — twenty miles away!
And just to grow their oats and hay,
They'd take this melted snow of mine
And coax it down a surveyed line,
And smooth it gently, like a lake,
For fear the ditch should wash and break,
And hamper it with pipe and drain,
And use it common like the rain,
A-smearing it across the field
To give their dust a double yield.
And they can do it — that's the worst!
A fellow doesn't fyle his thirst,
Record his mate, and God defend
That I may never brand a friend!
The stream is mine, in oral fee,
Because the waters speak to me.
A thousand year they've called my name —
Has any man a prior claim?
Not by the Greater Right! But then,
I know your courts of lawyer-men,
Their book-wise wisdom, bound in calf,
And how the very judge would laugh
And ask me for the cubic-gauge,
The signed and sealed recording page —
No justice there! And that is why
I fear these mates of mine may die
And leave their places bare and cold,
With me beside them sick and old.
Sometimes (perhaps my hearing's poor,

I hope to God it's nothing more)
The voices seem to falter out
And whisper, where they used to shout,
Seem kind of sad, and weary, too,
Not laughing like they used to do;
And then I think of what Bill said,
And seem to see the stony bed
A-glaring at me in the sun,
With all the singing voices dumb!
And then I watch the water sink
Below that lower basin brink,
Go down and down, and how I fret
And feel to find if it is wet,
And wonder if the flow will stop,
If they have stolen every drop,
And clench my hands, and grit my teeth,
And curse that irrigation thief —
Until the bursting clouds bring rain
That sends it flooding back again!
That's how we stand — I left the town
Because the people trod me down;
I left your love and hate and lies,
Your city with its peering eyes;
I called the old life at an end
And took this stream for wife and friend!
And now — hush! Listen to the stream
And tell me, Stranger, does it seem
Not quite so loud, and is it low,
Low — lower than a while ago?
Hush! Hark the voices — bend your ear —

What's that? Speak louder! I can't
hear —

What's that? No answer! What? Good-
bye?

You're leaving this old channel dry
And going round the other way
To help them grow . . . their oats . . . and
hay;

You're leaving me . . . you've made the
start;

Don't like the ditch . . . but friends must
part.

Remember you? But, God above!

You know I gave you all my love.

I'll not forget! Christ help me, lad!

They're dying — and I'm going mad!

THE PIONEER BREED

WE are our mothers' children;
This is our sires' behest:—
Lay your back to the burden,
Turn your face to the West!

Go! Where the stag breaks cover
And lone coyotes cry,
Over the uncrossed river,
Under the smooth-rimmed sky.

Delving your league-long furrow
Deep in the tufted loam,
Sleeping against the morrow
Snug in your wattled home,

Sowing the wheat and the clover,
Warily understand
You are the man and the lover,
She is the virgin land.

What if the land be barren,
Arid, rotten with rain?
Know ye the ways of women?
Go to your bride again!

Hold her against her season,
Hold, and bid her give birth!
Love with a blind unreason,
Lord of the pregnant earth!

LEGEND

*They drew his corpse from the bleeding thorns.
(Beware the Buck with the Golden Horns!)*

*Hunter was he and he went astray.
(The way of the woods is a woman's way.)*

He followed game as a hunter should,
Until he saw in a lonely wood
The Buck with the Golden Horns — ah! woe!
He dropped his arrows and knife and bow,
He dropped his pouch and his flinty spear,
To follow after that bounding deer.
Faster and faster the phantom ran,
Faster and faster followed the man,
Into a valley, over a stream,
Soft as a shadow, swift as a dream!
Higher and higher! They meet and merge
On the ragged lip of a chasm's verge —

*Hunter was he and he went astray.
(The way of the woods is a woman's way.)*

*They drew his corpse from the bleeding thorns.
(Beware the Buck with the Golden Horns!)*

WINE OF THE MORNING

WINE of the morning, once, in every vein
I felt your swiftest rapture; once, I knew
When the sun rose that I should drink of you,—
Drink and drink deep, be drunk and drink again.
Wine of the morning, once there was no pain
In your shrill, tinkling bells of steely dew,
No sorrow in the pine-sweet breath of you —
Wine of the morning, rouse my blood again!

Borne in love's brimming cup by one whose art
Is to keep pure the childhood of her heart,
Wine of the morning, come; the dawn wind stirs
With leafy breath night's shadowy gossamers;
Child of the morn, be fleet! I, too, would run
My youth out in the ardours of the sun.

ABOVE THE TREE-LINE

IMPREGNANT and outworn! Was ever bloom
Of flower upon these mountains, living fruit
Ripe for the lips (red lips and reedy flute!)
Of lovers, by some wavering water-plume?
Or were they ever old and ever mute,
Born without youth, in the shut hours of gloom,
Born without love, in chambers destitute,
A brooding menace and a nameless doom?

They turn and shoulder from their beds of silt
In desolate sickness; and the inclement morn
Looks down upon them with cold eyes of scorn,
And the green valley shudders at the guilt
Of those bleak summits, brute and uncreate,
Whose soul is spent, whose spirit devastate.

THE SONG OF THE WINDS

ALL the bright day we wandered and were
proud
As the free winds, and with them stormed the
height
And swayed the thrilling grasses in our flight,
So swift were we to press against the cloud
Our happy faces. Riotous and loud
We roused the lonely mountain with our might
Until he laughed with us in our delight
And crest to crest threw back the vows we
vowed.

Oh, love is of the mountains ; old as they,
Torn and triumphant as the riven crest
That fingers to the sky ; the ancient prey
Of every wind that strikes the open breast.
Our love is of the mountains, furious, strong,
And every wind of heaven is our song.

ASHNOLA

CHILD of the rooted earth,
Slender Ashnola,
Fern of the waking woods,
Dawn winds uphold you.

Deep from the breathing hills
Animate waters
Sing to your secret heart
Songs as mysterious.

Noon, from her flaming height,
Bends her down vainly;
Dark, from his kenneled depth,
Comes not to vex you.

Child of the rooted earth,
Slender Ashnola,
Fern of the waking woods,
Dawn winds uphold you.

